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PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK
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P 121619Z JUN 06
FM REO HILLAH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0659
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0645
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEHIHL/REO HILLAH 0710

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 HILLAH 000103

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BAGHDAD FOR NCT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 6/12/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: NO GOOD DEED GOES UNPUNISHED: BABIL POLICE CHIEF UNDER FIRE
FOR RESCUING GOVERNOR

REF: A) HILLAH 80 B) HILLAH 82 C) HILLAH 85 D) HILLAH 93 E) HILLAH 99

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CLASSIFIED BY: Douglas Meurs, Deputy Regional Coordinator, REO
Hillah, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (U) This is a Babil PRT Cable.

[1](#)2. (S) SUMMARY: Babil Police Chief General Qais Hamza Aboud Al-Momouri has yet again come under political fire from the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) affiliated Babil Provincial Governor, Salem Saleh Mehdi Al-Muslimawi. This time Qais has incurred the Governor's wrath for not saving him from hostile protesters during a June 6 demonstration in south Babil in a "timely fashion." Politically motivated allegations aside, this recent incident demonstrates that popular support for the Governor is waning and it may be more difficult for SCIRI to remove the secular Shi'a Babil Police Chief than previously imagined. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)3. (S) On June 6, residents of Al-Qasim, a medium sized city located in southern Babil, held a demonstration at the town's main government building, petitioning the mayor and the local council to make improvements in basic social services and to administer the equitable distribution of gas and propane. During the protest, the Governor of Babil, the Chair of the Provincial Council (PC) and two PC members came under direct physical assault from the protesters. Ironically, the provincial political leaders attended the protest under the misconception that the demonstrators organized the event against Babil Police Chief General Qais.

[1](#)4. (S) According to eyewitness accounts, a crowd of approximately six hundred individuals dissatisfied with negotiations taking place with the provincial leaders at the venue, physically attacked and destroyed the Governor's U.S.-provided armored SUV with rocks and subsequently forced their way into the municipal building. In retaliation, the Iraqi Police (IP) guarding the building fired into the crowd, wounding five civilians. Reports indicate that none of the civilians were critically injured. The protesters managed to overpower the police team and trapped the Governor and PC members inside the building.

[1](#)5. (S) During the attack, the Governor called Babil Police Chief General Qais and ordered him to come to the rescue. Qais, with an Al-Hillah SWAT unit, deployed to Al-Qasim and managed to calm the crowd. (COMMENT: General Qais met the Governor approximately four kilometers from Al-Qasim and did not actually

rescue him from the demonstrators. Apparently, the IP commander on the scene managed to secure the building and expedite the Governor's escape. END COMMENT). Upon his arrival at Al-Qasim, the protesters pleaded with Qais to present their demands to the PC. The General agreed to the request and additionally commented that corruption in the provincial government is the direct cause for current gas and propane shortages (ref tel E).

¶16. (C) The SCIRI Governor, who is presently spearheading the effort to have General Qais removed from office, detailed a completely different rendition of the events, maintaining that an armed insurgent group instigated the attack and General Qais failed to deploy the SWAT team in a timely manner. General Qais, on the other hand, informed PRT staff that he specifically warned the Governor and PC Chair on June 5 not to travel to Al-Qasim as local citizens planned a demonstration. According to Qais, the PC Chair retorted disdainfully to the advice, "we intend to walk with our people."

¶17. (C) A committee from the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) traveled to Al-Qasim on June 7 to investigate the incident. According to local contacts, during a meeting between the MOI committee and the PC, one MOI representative expressed his complete support for General Qais and chastised the PC members for allegedly attempting to morph the successful rescue into a fallacious allegation against the General. The contact further stated that the committee intended to submit a positive after-action report to MOI headquarters in Baghdad concerning the Babil Police Chief's leadership during the clash.

¶18. (C) The MOI decision to back Qais in line with previous MOI support for the General has further embroiled Babil political life. The SCIRI members of the PC, according to Al-Hillah Mayor Imad Lefta, have prolonged their "suspension" of PC activities and have closed the provincial municipal building in Al-Hillah, as they previously threatened to do if the MOI refuses to endorse their decision to fire General Qais (ref D). Lefta added that the striking SCIRI members have removed all of their seals and papers from their offices and intend to "dump them on

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the desk of Prime Minister Maliki" in a demonstration of their solidarity against the Babil Police Chief.

¶19. (S) COMMENT: It is highly ironic that General Qais saved the Governor - someone who is desperately trying to replace him with a SCIRI party loyalist (ref A, B, C, D). Hopefully the successful rescue will serve as evidence that despite the PC's claims, Qais is a professional, dedicated to his mission and loyal to Iraq. On the other hand, Babil is now effectively without a legislative branch. Moreover, most local contacts have voiced that the dim-witted attempt by the Governor to cast the rescue as a failure will surely backfire. The Chief of Military Intelligence in Babil commented at the weekly REO security meeting, "The downfall of a certain individual [e.g. the Governor] begins this way." Meanwhile, the Governor has already submitted a request to the REO for a new armored SUV. END COMMENT.
MEURS